

Message Text

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21

ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA

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INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SOFIA 2585

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, BU, YU

SUBJECT: WHY THE YUGOSLAVS KEEP AGITATING THE MACEDONIAN ISSUE

REF: A) SOFIA 2563; B) BELGRADE 6241; C) SOFIA 0499 (MAR 75)
(NOTAL)

1. HAVING JUST RETURNED FROM A VISIT TO BUDAPEST AND PRAGUE,
I WOULD LIKE TO ADD A COMMENT TO THE INTERESTING EXCHANGE
BETWEEN SOFIA AND BELGRADE ON THE APPARENT OBDURACY OF THE
YUGOSLAVS IN THE FACE OF RECENT BULGARIAN OVERTURES,
WHY THE YUGOSLAVS ARE MAKING DEMANDS ON THE BULGARIANS THAT
THE LATTER ARE UNLIKELY TO FULFILL AND WHAT IT WOULD TAKE TO
SETTLE THE MACEDONIAN ISSUE.

2. I THINK THERE IS A SIMPLER EXPLANATION FOR THE ATTITUDES OF
BOTH SIDES THAN THE FACT THAT THE BULGARIANS ARE SUBSERVIENT TO
THE SOVIET UNION. THE YUGOSLAVS, IT SEEMS TO ME, ARE FOLLOWING A
BRILLIANT TACTIC OF KEEPING THE BULGARIANS OFF-BALANCE ON THE MACE-
DONIAN ISSUE BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT CERTAIN THAT THE BULGARIANS
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WOULDN'T UTILIZE DIFFICULTIES IN YUGOSLAVIA TO MAKE

TROUBLE IN YUGOSLAV MACEDONIA; AND IN THIS OF COURSE THEY ARE ON PLAUSIBLE GROUND, CONSIDERING THAT BULGARIA HAS PLAYED THE MACEDONIAN ISSUE TIME AND AGAIN FOR ITS OWN NATIONAL BENEFIT AND HAS OCCUPIED WHAT TODAY IS THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA THREE TIMES DURING THIS CENTURY.

3. I DO NOT THINK, THEREFORE, THAT THE RECOGNITION OF A SEPARATE IDENTITY OF THE MACEDONIANS IN BULGARIA, OR EVEN GRANTING OF AUTONOMY TO THEM, WOULD SETTLE THE ISSUE. THE YUGOSLAVS HAVE A PLAUSIBLE NATIONAL INTEREST IN AGITATING THIS ISSUE, AND THE BULGARIANS HAVE A PLAUSIBLE NATIONAL INTEREST IN NOT YIELDING TO THE YUGOSLAV DEMANDS.

4. THAT THE BULGARIANS ARE SUBSERVIENT TO THE SOVIET UNION IS OF COURSE ENTIRELY TRUE, BUT THE USSR COULD AFTER ALL ENCOURAGE BULGARIA TO GIVE IN ON THE MACEDONIAN ISSUE FOR THE SAKE OF BETTER RELATIONS WITH YUGOSLAVIA. IF THIS IS NOT HAPPENING, IT IS BECAUSE SOVIET INTERESTS COINCIDE WITH BULGARIAN INTERESTS. WE MAY, AS SOFIA PREDICTED IN REF C, SEE THIS ISSUE QUIET DOWN AFTER THE NEXT BULGARIAN CENSUS IS COMPLETED, BUT I RATHER DOUBT IT. THE YUGOSLAVS, IT SEEMS TO ME, ARE PLAYING ESSENTIALLY A GAME OF PREEMPTIVE DIPLOMACY. AS LONG AS THE BULGARIANS ARE KEPT STRICTLY ON THE DEFENSIVE ON THE MACEDONIAN ISSUE, THEY ARE LESS LIKELY TO FISH IN TROUBLED WATERS ON THE YUGOSLAV SIDE OF THE BORDER.

5. I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THERE IS SUCH A THING AS HISTORICAL JUSTICE; LORD KNOWS HISTORY HAS BEEN UNJUST TO MANY PEOPLES. BUT IN THIS CASE IT IS WORTH OBSERVING THAT THE BULGARIANS ARE GETTING WHAT IS COMING TO THEM. THEY HAVE MADE THE MACEDONIAN ISSUE INTO A GOOD THING FOR THEMSELVES (NOT FOR THE USSR BUT FOR THEMSELVES) AGAIN AND AGAIN, USUALLY IN COOPERATION WITH GERMANY. NOW THE SHOE IS ON THE OTHER FOOT, AND INSTEAD OF THE BULGARIANS BLEEDING FOR THEIR BRETHREN ACROSS THE BORDER, THE YUGOSLAVS AFFECT TO BE TERRIBLY CONCERNED FOR MINORITY RIGHTS OF MACEDONIANS ON THE BULGARIAN SIDE OF THE BORDER. AND THIS IS SO BECAUSE TITO HAD THE BRILLIANT

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IDEA OF PROCLAIMING THAT THERE IS A MACEDONIAN "NATION" HEADQUARTERED IN YUGOSLAVIA.

6. SO I DON'T ENTIRELY AGREE WITH MY COLLEAGUE SILBERMAN THAT A SOLUTION OF THE MACEDONIAN ISSUE WOULD "REQUIRE MANIFESTATION OF BULGARIAN INDEPENDENCE OF THE SOVIET UNION." THE SOVIET UNION MAY WELL WISH THE BULGARIANS TO COMPOSE THIS ISSUE WITH YUGOSLAVIA, AND SOME DAY MAY

IN FACT FORCE THEM TO DO SO; BUT BASICALLY THE ISSUE INVOLVES CONFLICTING NATIONAL INTERESTS, AND THE BULGARIANS ARE BEHAVING ENTIRELY IN CHARACTER BY PRETENDING INNOCENCE AND, IN EFFECT, DENYING THAT THERE ARE SUCH PEOPLE AS MACEDONIANS IN BULGARIA. THEIR INJURED INNOCENCE IS NOT CONVINCING, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF THEIR PAST RECORD OF STIRRING UP THE ISSUE.
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